

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE
WILSON CREEK SUBREGION
TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN
EA# ID130-2006-EA-1927**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the findings documented in Environmental Assessment ID130-2006-EA-1927, implementation of the Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, no Environmental Impact Statement is required.

I base my findings on the following:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The environmental assessment considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. Implementation of route designation, including: restriction of mountain bikes and equestrian use to designated travel routes, reduction in the total available route mileage, closure of a cross-country play area, installation of an integrated system of informational, educational, and interpretive signs, construction/improvement of two staging areas, and establishment of a no shooting zone within ¼ mile of the staging area would provide substantial reductions in impacts to natural and cultural resources, and would improve the quality of recreational experience and public safety in the Wilson Creek Subregion. The establishment of designated, non-motorized trails will help protect recreational diversity in the general area by securing high quality recreational experiences for mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians and preventing non-motorized routes from being transformed into motorized routes.

Reductions in available route mileage, particularly for motorized users may have a small, localized adverse effect, but the relatively minor loss of access to some routes in Wilson Creek is balanced by many miles of motorized road and trail access available in nearby subregions of the Owyhee Front Special Recreation Management Area.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The Proposed Action would impose some restrictions on shooting near established staging areas, and this would help reduce the potential for injury to recreational users in high use areas. This action will reduce the level of dust and noise from recreational use that is currently occurring in the area, and this would result in a somewhat healthier environment for local residents and other users of the public lands. The construction of a

short bypass trail to briefly separate mountain bikers and equestrians on a steep portion of trail with poor site lines should reduce the potential for serious injuries to the public.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No major effects on any unique characteristics were identified in the EA. Concern about the potential effects of some types of recreational use on two National Register-eligible cultural properties located within the subregion resulted in exclusion of some kinds of recreational use in the vicinity of those properties. The Proposed Action avoided placing new routes into areas identified as Deer Winter Range.

Virtually all of the subregion lies within a wild horse herd management area. The analysis showed that by channeling recreational use onto signed, maintained trails there would be beneficial effects for wild horses by keeping concentrated recreational use away from relatively undisturbed areas where horses tend to congregate.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment is likely to be highly controversial.

Extensive public scoping indicated widespread general support for placing controls on rising recreational use in the Wilson Creek Subregion and for providing improved non-motorized recreational opportunities there. Some input received from the public expressed concerns about the effects of recreation development and use of the area on wild horses, particularly about the effects of a user-established staging site that is situated in an area where spring foaling occurs. Analysis of available information in the EA could not establish that wild horses were currently being harmed by that facility, or by general recreational use, but the proposed action incorporates a three-year monitoring program to determine the effects of that facility on wild horses.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment which are highly uncertain or involve unknown risks as a result of this action. Inaction would likely result in a variety of additional risks and impacts as uncontrolled recreational use expands into important horse and wildlife areas. As the regional population grows, BLM faces an inevitable rise in human use of the Wilson Creek area. While the agency is not in a position to stop this rise in use, it proposes to use a variety of standard management tools that have been successfully applied elsewhere minimize the impacts of intensive recreational use, including hardening staging areas, and establishing a designated transportation system with maps and directional, regulatory, and educational signs that establish clear rules and reasonable expectations for public behavior.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The actions and practices analyzed in the EA are normal practices that have been successfully implemented elsewhere. This EA does not set a precedent for future actions that have significant effects. Implementation of a transportation planning system is mandated by decisions made in the 1999 Owyhee Resource Management Plan. The EA provides for flexibility and potential changes in management actions through use of adaptive management principles, but any future projects in the Wilson Creek that have impacts outside the scope of this document will require a separate analysis.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

This EA considered potential cumulative impacts of the Proposed Action and concluded that implementation will not cause significant cumulative effects on biological, cultural, or social resources, even when considered in relation to other actions.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Based on the analysis documented in the EA, the proposed action will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Concern about potential effects of some types of recreational use on a National Register-eligible cultural structure located within the subregion resulted in exclusion of those recreational uses in the vicinity of the property. Another site whose register eligibility is currently undetermined would be protected from potential impact by closing a route that intersects the site.

Currently undiscovered eligible or listed properties that might be discovered in the future would be protected from loss or destruction using appropriate management techniques, including route closure or avoidance.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

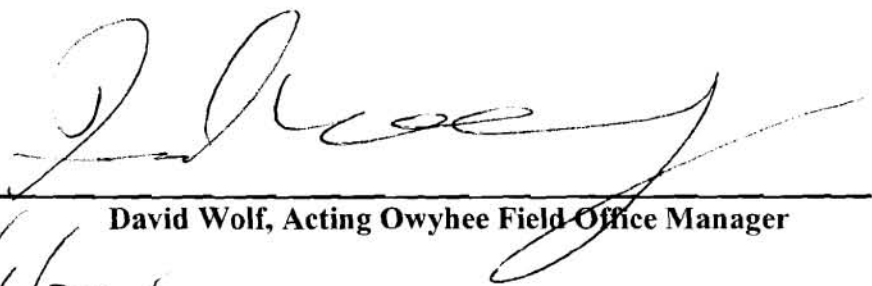
One federally listed species, the Idaho springsnail, is known to occur in the Snake River immediately adjacent to the project area and one threatened species, the American bald eagle winters along the Snake River, and occasionally uses the project area. The EA analysis showed that the proposed action would avoid any adverse impacts to these species.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law for requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

The proposed action was developed in accordance with Federal, State, and local laws for the protection of the environment. The EA disclosed the effect of the proposed action on all critical and non-critical elements and it was determined that the proposed action will not adversely affect any of these elements.

Signatures

Approved by:



David Wolf, Acting Owyhee Field Office Manager

Date:

